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SONGS OF MANY DAYS

FLORENCE EVELYN PRATT



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SONGS OF MANY DAYS

By

FLORENCE EVELYN PRATT

(Mrs. Clarence Herbert Youngs)



Boston

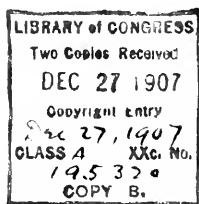
RICHARD G. BADGER

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To
My Daughter
Ethel Bidwell Youngs

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SONGS OF MANY DAYS

THE CHOSEN VALENTINE

Fair Bella had a string of beaux,
Too many for her loving,
So like a canny maiden chose
Their homage to be proving.

Said she, "The man who sends to me
The valentine most pleasing,
My chosen lover he shall be;
So there's an end of teasing."

The beaux began their eager quest,
Each powdered head excited,
To serve fair Bella's gay behest
When such a prize required.

Upon the morn of valentines
Came letters pining, burning,
And offering jewels of the mines
For love of her returning;

And offering ruffled hands, and hearts
That waited on her pleasures;
And talked of Cupid's fiery darts
In all poetic measures.

Amid the pleading, pining sheets
One struck a stronger keynote.
"I do not talk to you of sweets,
And love — you are the queen o't.

“But now or never must you choose
 ’Twixt me and swains a-sighing.
Tonight I’ll wait you ’neath the yews.
 Will you with me be flying?”

The moonlight shone through oak and yew
 Where, cloaked and spurred, he waited;
And far across the snow it threw
 Their shadows, black, serrated.

The moonlight shone through oak and yew
 And in the snowy garden,
Where swift and light a little shoe
 Upbore a merry burden.

To right, to left, down snowy ways
 Her watchful eyes were glancing,
And spite of lace, brocade and stays,
 Her girlish heart was dancing.

A kiss, a hurried word or so,
 And steeds and coach went flying
Across the night, across the snow,
 And left the swains a-sighing.

This to the swains— “Well may you rue
 My flight; no doubt you chid it.
But while you dreamed of what you’d do,
 Like a bold man he did it!”

THE REEFS OF ST. DESIRE

Wild was the night and stormy,
And black wings flickered past;
Our great grey sail was caught in the gale
And stripped from the cracking mast.

The wind was mad behind us,
And a dreadful sound drew near;
And cold we grew, for each man knew,
As on like a frightened bird we flew,
'Twas the reef of St. Desire.

A crash, and the broken foremast
Toppled with all its gear,
And out on the bowsprit crouching low
I was chopping it free and clear.

Lashed to the jarring bowsprit,
Drenched with the ghastly foam,
I thought of my wife, and my reckless life,
And the little ones at home.

Deep we dove in the water,
And when we rose once more,
Something there sat on the sprit by me
That had not been there before.

Puffed were its lips and streaming,
And purple as drowned men's be;
My brain grew dim as I looked at him
And knew he had come for me.

He stood erect on the bowsprit,
And was shapeless and sodden and tall.
"Look," he said, "at the iris dead,
And washed from its rotting ball!

"Look at my hair! 'tis slimy
With all the ooze of the sea;
And like this tonight, for my delight,
Shalt thou and thy comrades be!"

"Thou fiend! how have I wronged thee
That thou shouldst haunt me so?"
"I sailed like thee on the faithless sea
In a time that is long ago.

"I left in the port behind me
My wife and her children three;
When I came again from the Spanish Main
I found she was wed to thee.

"I drowned in the sea soon after,
And this was my hope of bliss,—
To see thee drown and thy hopes go down,
And God has given me this!"

"We thought thee dead," I answered;

"Thy children wanted bread.

That I was kind in deed and mind

The neighbors have always said.

"But why should my blameless comrades

Lie in the dreadful sea?

I stole thy kin, though I meant no sin;

Let thy vengeance fall on me!"

I cut me free from my lashings

And stood on the shaking spar.

"Fling me," I cried, "to the hungry tide,

But my comrades blameless are.

"Darest thou steal from their children

Their morsel of daily bread?"

"So would mine own, if thou wert gone,

Hunger and thirst," he said.

He wailed, and wrung his bloated hands,

With his awful eyes on me;

"I came from my grave in the soundless wave

To gloat and to feast on thee!

“Am I to lose the rapture
I craved in my jealous woe?
For the sake of my children’s hungry mouths —
Yes — I will let thee — go!”

My heart was ice within me,
For I stood alone on the pole;
And I heard a shout from heaven ring out,
As I am a living soul.

And then in the eastern distance,
Where the waves were tossing high,
Midst their mounting valleys and sinking heights
I saw the dawn in the sky.

Softly its spectral fingers
Loosened the storm away,
And one by one smoothed the billows down
To the level floor of the bay.

And then in awe and trembling
I stole to the slippery deck,
And heard the voice of the captain cry
In joy o’er the drifting wreck.

Softly the light came stealing
As we swung there free and clear,
And murmuring low in the morning glow
Were the reefs of St. Desire.

CHRISTMAS SONG

Oh, Christmas is a jolly time
When forests hang with snow,
And other forests bend with toys
And lordly Yule-logs glow.

And Christmas is a solemn time,
Because beneath the Star
The first great Christmas Gift was given
To all men near and far.

But not alone at Christmas time
Come holiday and cheer,
For he who loves a little child
Has Christmas all the year.

THE DANCE OF THE CHRISTMAS TREES

In the land where Santa Claus keeps house,
Where Jack Frost creeps as still as a mouse,
There is a whispering and a rushing
Like small rain falling, like full streams gushing,
To the horn of the wind, to the flute of the
breeze;
'Tis the dance, the dance of the Christmas trees
In the far-off Christmas Tree Country.

In that far land, where the snow lies deep,
Men go stamping, with teams that creep,
With creaking sleds, and with axes keen
They go to gather the Christmas green.
Little green babes and sturdy trees,
Down they rush like a wild young breeze.
 “Good-by, my Christmas Tree Country!”

At night, when the silence is profound,
The others foot their solemn round
With many a sparkling wreath of ice
And flaunting snow-plume point device.
And the little stars in their nightgowns white
Sit up late to stare at the sight
 In the far-off Christmas Tree Country.

The Northern Lights on the hills so bare
Tiptoe eagerly here and there,
Over tree-shoulders trying to see
The Christmas trees dance solemnly;
The trees which did not go to town
Keeping the feast among woods so brown
 In the far-off Christmas Tree Country.

THE GIFTS

There is a night which children love,
A time of fadeless youth,
A time when tenderest legendry
Entwines with holiest truth.
O happy night! O holy night!
Still shines thy radiant star
On shepherds watching in the fields,
On wise men journeying far.

There is a tree the children love
Whose flowers are all of light,
Whose fruitage is a shower of gifts
Of wonder and delight.
Beneath the branches of that tree
Care flies and pain is mute,
And hands long sundered meet again
When gathering its fruit.

There is a Child the children love,
Couched on His mother's knee,
On Him the happy star doth shine,
And on the Christmas Tree.
Out from those baby hands of His,
Like rose leaves softly curled,
Hath come that happy, holy thing,
The Christmas of the world.

THE THREE WAITS

Trudging along through the Christmas snow
The waits were laughing together;
Hood and jerkin and cloak closedrawn,
They cared no jot for the weather.
The lights of the great hall shone afar.
“What, ho!” said Dickon the treble;
“Think of the ale that Nan will bring,
And her teasing — the little rebel!”

“Think of the silver pennies, lads!”
Dan chuckled, “and what they’re bringing!”
But Roger had never a word to say,—
He was dreaming of the singing.
So under the great old walls they came
Where the ivy clambered and clung,
And somebody threw the casement wide —
The chatelaine, gentle and young.

Oh! sweet the carols the waits sang out,
Lusty of heart and voice!
And the little maid in the window framed
Felt her heart sing, too, “Rejoice!”
For the stars and the night and the crisp new
snow
And the wintry, tingling air,
For the carols dear and the fair-haired lad
Singing so joyously there.

Dickon the treble, he had his ale,
And a kiss from his buxom Nan;
And the Squire came down and with high good-
will
Gave silver and praise to Dan.
But Roger the singer had naught, had naught,
As he fared by the starry gleam,
But a Christmas rose from the casement cast,
And, warm in his heart, a dream!

WATCHING THE OLD YEAR DIE

Last New Year's Eve we gathered round
In the firelight's glorious blaze,
To watch the passing of the year,
And the dawn of other days.

There was no light but the red firelight
In the old Squire's ancient hall,
Quaint with its memories of old days
And manners colonial.

And we of the modern time and ways
Laughed in the firelight there;
Madge, with her mischievous, glancing eyes,
Edith, with saint-like hair;

Elinor, with her air of pride
And her charming hostess-ways;
Two or three other men and I
Drew round in the chimney-blaze.

Jest and story, laughter and song,
Hurried the moments by,
As, young and happy, we clustered there
Watching the Old Year die.

Fun and frolic were at their height,
When far and keen and low
We heard the Old Year's passing-bell
Toll out across the snow.

We rose, and silently we stood
Hearing the solemn swell,
And hand sought hand, as over us all
Some dim foreboding fell.

Did Madge, in that strange and breathless space,
See her coming bridal veil?
Did Edith dream of the strait white bed
Wherein she should lie, so pale?

Did Elinor, in her girlish pride,
Dream of her altered lot?
Had Roger word of a broken tie,
And troth and trust forgot?

Humphrey, saw you a heaving sea,
With its endless waves of gray?
And heard you the song of the arrow, Fred,
Already upon its way?

Our hands clung together, we could not speak
Till the mournful bells were done,
And the chimes outclamored a jubilant peal
To welcome the New Year sun.

The strain was broken. We moved and laughed,
And frolic and mirth grew high.
Yet tonight I am sitting here alone,
Watching the Old Year die.

MEMORIAL DAY

Old, old men in carriages, trundling along so
slow;
Old, old men a-marching, with the spirit of long
ago;
Old, old flags furled straitly, dreaming of shot
and shell;
All that is left of the old war, save the tale the
histories tell.

Young men marching briskly, all in their khaki
brown,
Heroes of Santiago or far Manila town.
Wounded, they never weakened. They suffered
and yet they sang,
And over the land long shackled the hymns of
Freedom rang!

O white heads bowed and feeble! O brown
heads high and proud!
We love you and pray God bless you! we who
stand in the crowd.
And we thank the merciful Father that, all our
history through,
He has given us such a memory and such a hope
as you!

A SOLDIER'S VALENTINE

It was only a square of paper lace,
Where roses and hearts entwine,
And beneath them a loving word or two:
Only a valentine.

A frivolous thing, in an envelope
All covered with cooing doves,
Forget-me-nots, and hearts, and darts,
And little ecstatic loves.

'Twas sent by a girl who kissed it once,
As she stood in the whirling snow,
Where the lights from the corner store through
the storm
Sent out a hazy glow.

But our Uncle Samuel must have guessed,
No matter what else might wait,
That letter must go, post-haste! post-haste!
From here to the Golden Gate.

Far across the river and over the hills
And the prairies, on it flew;
It dodged a wreck and it entered storms,
And once 'twas the last train through.

Then forth it put to the western sea,
Where the speeding waves upcurled;
And the Cupids and love-birds sailed away
To the other side of the world.

O wonderful scrap of paper lace!
It went to a hospital bed
Where a homesick soldier tossed and turned
And would not be comforted;

And somehow the soldier felt that day
Soft arms, whose pressure he knew,
And home and loev and health and hope
Thrilled him through and through.

And he felt new love for our Uncle Sam
Who had lent his trains and men
And ships, that the whole wide world apart,
Two hearts might meet again.

THE TATTERED FLAGS

I saw the soldiers march today
Through eager crowds, and heard
The olden wartime music play
Till every pulse was stirred.
And cheers went down the avenue
As gallantly they came,
For everyone knew some one there,
And joyed to shriek his name.
They cheered them well; yet like a flood
Outrushed the glorious cry
When, borne by gray-haired veterans,
The tattered flags went by.

Oh, what a rush of memories
Went down the shaken throng!
And olden sorrows stirred again
Where they had slumbered long;
And faithful hearts remembered still
The sad yet shining day
When flaunting in the stirring breeze,
Those flags went down Broadway;

And sobbing women followed on
And not a cheek was dry,
As, newly consecrate to war,
The flags went proudly by.

But for those flags the flags today
Had not so brave an air,
And newer stars ne'er come from heaven
To shine in glory there.
Not yet, oh flags, your mission ends,
While hearts there are to swell
With pride and love at all the tale
Your tatters mutely tell.
Oh, glorious sight, each year to stir
Our souls to visions high!
Cheer on, oh, friends! although through tears
The tattered flags go by.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Lincoln, the woodsman, in the clearing stood,
Hemmed by the solemn forest stretching round:
Stalwart, ungainly, honest-eyed and rude,
The genius of that solitude profound.
He clove the way that future millions trod,
He passed, unmoved by worldly fear or pelf;
In all his lusty toil he found not God,
Though in the wilderness he found himself.

Lincoln, the President, in bitter strife,
Best-loved, worst-hated of all living men,
Oft single-handed, for the nation's life
Fought on, nor rested ere he fought again.
With one unerring purpose armed, he clove
Through selfish sin; then, overwhelmed with
care,
His great heart sank beneath its load of love:
Crushed to his knees, he found his God in
prayer.

THE FLOWERS OF DECORATION DAY

Blossoms there are for days of troth
And blushing bride-array;
Blossoms to make for trembling feet
A rosy marriage-way;

Daisies that star the early fields
For chubby hands to hold,
And buttercups, which God has sent
To be the babies' gold.

But we, a higher fate is ours,
Ordained from bud to bloom
To lie amid the green young grass
Above a soldier's tomb;

And when upon the quiet graves
With love and tears we're laid,
And music swells from martial bands
They heard when on parade;

And when the tattered flags are raised
They fought and died to keep,
We feel astir through tangled growths
A thrill from hearts that sleep.

Then when the dew falls silently,
With throbbing drums gone by,
We are on guard, we flowers, and proud
Upon such graves to die!

AN ECSTASY IN YELLOW

To and fro, high and low,
Dicky-bird swings away;
Poises and sings with folded wings
To the golden close of the day.
What tho' the skies with storm-clouds lower,
All dappled with drifting rain?
He sings and sings thro' the passing shower
Till the heavens are blue again.
Naught cares he for the gloomy weather;
There's never a droop of a yellow feather.
As for fluff little heart and throat together
They nearly burst as he sings,
Like a gay little flute gone mad with glee
That the fairies have played with stealthily
And gifted with golden wings.

GOODBYE, CHILDHOOD

Goodbye, Childhood! here's the gate
Where we two must separate.
Ah, how sweet were other years!
Laughter shining down the tears;
Not a thorn beneath the rose,
Not a raindrop in the cloud;
Joy in every wind that blows,
Rapture bubbling into song,
Till the way grew rough — and long.
O little shining curls! O face
Of sweetest innocence and grace!
Never again to walk with thee,
Without thy kiss alone to be!
Give me the little budding rose
Thy small moist fingers soft enclose,
And kiss me sweet for memory,
Then, little faithful heart, goodbye!
I see her, all reluctant, stray
Along the golden-vista'd way,
And watching me with wistful eyes
As she goes back to Paradise.

YOUTH

O youth, kind Heaven's most glorious gift,
Why is thy course so swift, so swift?
Why do thy tints so early pale,
And the under-note creep into the tune?
O what a thing it is to be young!
To venture with thought, with foot, with tongue;
To hold belief in the Holy Grail;
To bear the frost like the heat of June;
To trust, to love, to know things pure,
To dream that happiness may endure.
The light of the eye, the flush of the cheek,
And the hot blood thrilling us through and
through;
The depth of feeling we cannot speak;
The learning of truths forever new;
These, O youth, are thine to know!
Wherefor so swiftly go?

FIREFLIES

The night is dark, and the hammock swings,
 Lazily stirring the scented air,
As I watch those anxious lamps on wings
 Hurrying breathlessly everywhere.

Where do you go with such frantic speed?
 Never a moment you stop or stay.
What distresses you? Where is the need
 Of scurrying so on your unknown way?

After you anxiously goes my thought;
 Like you goes blundering over things
No sober keeping in lines as taught,
 Patient in folly as you on wings.

But see! my hammock has snared you fast!
 Now you are captured, what can you do?
And my aimless thought comes stumbling past,
 Caught — in the meshes of Wisdom — too!

Friend, if I set you free as before
 (Send out no signals of wild distress!),
To go on your purposeless chase once more,
 Surely Wisdom can do no less!

THE WITCH MAIDEN

The hearth is cold and the ashes white;
My heart it is numb and chill.
The red moon leers with an evil light
Over the shouldered hill,
Wild witch-laughter is in the air,
Dim flickerings fill the sky;
But oh, for their mischief I would not care
Had they passed my goodman by!
They have left this strange white babbling thing
In the shape that my goodman wore,
And he maunders on in a dreadful voice
I never have heard before.

*“Her locks — are white as — the weaver’s flax,
Her smile — is the stroke — of death;
She lures a man’s soul — out of his eyes,
And sucks his laboring breath.
But oh, her eyes — her terrible eyes,
That smoulder — and blaze — and gleam —
Slow — as a snake’s — benumbing gaze,
Deep — as the miller’s — stream!”*

I have heard the tales of the gossip folk
Whispered in chimney nooks,
Of the wild witch-maiden that stealeth souls
Whither-away she looks.

How she gathers them, crowding, chained,
And drives them on through the air,
And scourges them on their dolorous road
With whips of her whirling hair.

I thought 'twas a tale for chimney nooks,
To be whispered and told anew
When the chestnuts roast and the apples turn,
But oh, it is true — 'tis true!
She hath looked and gazed in his dazzled eyes
Till he knows my face no more;
She hath breathed strange sayings into his ears,
And he hears my voice no more.
She hath stolen his smile — it may come no more
The sign of his soul to be;
She hath kissed his lips, and he maunders on
With never a word of me.

*“Her locks — are white — as the weaver’s flax—
Her smile — is the stroke — of death;
She lures a man’s soul — out of his eyes—
And sucks his laboring breath!”—*

The elder blossoms are sweet and white,
But they could not stop nor stay.
She came in the red moon’s cursèd light,
Over the leaden bay;
She came with eager and savage hands,
And hath carried his soul away!

THE DREAMERS

Low sinks the westering sun. The apple-trees
Nestle the drowsy birds. The air is still
Save where a little vagrant of a breeze
Runs through the seeded grasses on the hill.

The shadows lengthen from the western wood.
The gray old gravestones stoop beneath the
trees
Like weary mothers, nodding while they brood
Their sleeping children, cradled on their knees.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW

My grandam sat and spun and crooned
When the eventide was slow,
And the strange gray shadows crept from the ash
Of the red fire, smouldering low.
I leaned my arm on the window ledge,
And looked out into the gray;
And the road grew dim, and the singing brook
Stole out of sight with the day.

“Margery,” quoth my grandam then,
“Set ye the curds, my maid,
And a pan of cream for the little folk,
Where the even cloth is laid.

If Robin Goodfellow come this night
He must not go wroth away,
And the brew will work and the tasks be done
Before the break of the day."

The curds were set and the pan of cream,
And the great moon peeped to see.
I watched for him in the shadowed room,
And the cricket watched with me.
Then in the still of the scented night
A footstep came at the door,
And a lightsome, gladsome, comely youth
Stepped in on the moonlit floor.

His eyes were merry, his smile was gay
As the very soul of mirth,
He pursed his lips at the clotted cream,
And called gray Puss from the hearth.
He went about with a dancing step,
And the tasks sped merrily,
And all had been well but for old gray Puss
That purringly slipped to me.

He saw me and stopped, as my frightened eyes
Peered out at him through the gloom,
And he bowed with a mischievous smile, and
passed
Like a shadow forth from the room;
But he stopped at the door and kissed a rose
That bloomed at the threshold's rim,
Then passed from sight. But oh, my heart
Like a lost child cried for him!

I steal by night to the shadowed room
To watch if he come again,
And a stir in the thicket stains my cheek;
But it reddens all in vain;
And lovers come and my heart grows kind,
And once it was almost won;
But the threshold rose peeped in at the door,
And I dreamed, and my hope was done.

OKATILLAS


They spring erect and cleave the radiance bright
In stiff, gray shafts, thick set with many a
spine,
Bayonet-sharp, half hidden by the fine
Close-growing leaves; the arid land's delight.
A plume of flame, a flash of scarlet light,
The tufted flowers run lightly down the line,
Like tongues prophetic, that in days divine
Descended on apostles in men's sight.
But most like hoary ranks of Indian seers,
Waiting release from life's encircling bars,
Full of the garnered wisdom of their years,
With long remembrance of old strifes and
scars;
While on their venerable heads appears
The flame that marks their heirship to the
stars.

TITO AND I

Tito and I for the old padrone
Sang in the streets together.
Under the carven flowers of stone,
Merry or sad the weather.

Every day was a golden day
If Tito were there beside me,
Under his torn and faded coat
From trouble and storm to hide me.

Tito could laugh on a crust a day,
Feeling no sting of sorrow,
Though he knew we were hungry yesterday
With nothing to hope tomorrow.

Just a rose to stick in his coat,
Or the sound of a wayside fountain,
Or just to follow a foaming brook 
That rushed from the pine-hung mountain,

Made him as glad as the gay marchese
Who stared at my amber tresses
And angered Tito one summer day
With his words like bland caresses,

Tito sang and the world was gay
Under the open heaven.
The people heard, and their flowers and gold
Were lightly and gladly given.

Oh, my brother! to see thy face
With its tender meanings glowing,
I would give my glory of gold and place
That they envy me, unknowing,

To go again through the stony streets
With never a thought to grieve me,
If thou couldst rise from thy early grave,
Never again to leave me!

THE SWAN MAIDEN

How have I chanced to grieve thee,
Oh, dearest love of my life,
That thou shouldst be cold, or wound me
With a glance as keen as a knife?

Since I found thee in the spring-time,
In the time when the wild swans come,
Thou hast warmed my lonely spirit
With dreams of love and home.

At the edge of the marsh I found thee,
'Mid moss-bogs crouched away,
A glimmer of flesh and tangled locks
And strange keen eyes of gray.

And many a weird foreboding
Has swelled and ceased in my breast,
Thou wife with the strange unhomely ways,
And the wayward and wild unrest!

There thou standest, and watching
The pale green evening sky,
Thou seest the wild swans southward
Over the black marsh fly.

I would that my heart would lighten!
Yet far away and harsh,
With a wild, compelling cadence,
The swans call o'er the marsh.

Wistful, I watch thee, darkening
The threshold, still and lone.
Sudden a blank of twilight!
Freya! — she's gone! she's gone!

A MORNING CANTER

Come, my Nelly, and let's together
Down the lane where the cattle stray,
Ho! for the perfect autumn weather
In silver bloom on the world today!
Morning light that is pale and saintly,
Morning air that is chill and sweet,
Arches of maple frosted faintly,
Tinkle of Nelly's flying feet.
Eloquent eye that is backward turning,
Ear that waits for the word I say,
Trembling limbs with impatience burning,
Eager to gallop the world away,—

That is Nelly. O farewell, sorrow!
Care and trouble will lifted be;
Naught but joy from the hour we borrow
When Nelly and I and the morn agree
Glimmer of birches down in the hollow,
Woods where a late, sweet songster sings;
Noise of a brook we always follow,
Yet never find in its wanderings;
Hill and dale and the wide white river,
Decked with plumes of the curling mist
That glow like the rose and fade forever,
By the whirling sun too warmly kissed;
Thunder of hoofs on the wooden bridges,
Off again to the grass and dew,
Rattle of leaves in the naked hedges —
Hold! for Nelly has cast a shoe,
Tuneful clangor of iron and anvil,
Gleam and glow of the vassal flame,
Chink, chink, chink of the busy hammer,
And off we canter the way we came,
Glory of sun through the bare black branches,
Melting the frost in the woodland ways;
Passing glimpses of distant mountains,
Lulled in a fairy azure haze;
Brown home-fields that are sharp with stubble,
Glimpse of a gilded weather-vane;
Up the road with its crunching gravel,
And Nelly and I are at home again!

DETHRONED

She stood dethroned, a weak child-queen,
Amidst a rebel court,
Her scepter tossed from hand to hand,
Of every serf the sport.
Fierce Passion, dark and strong and wild,
First seized the glittering thing;
Then haughty Pride the jewel caught,
Himself proclaiming king.
Pale Sorrow mocked her next, until
With heavy mailèd hand
Suspicion struck it from his grasp
And shook the slender wand.

And then the court-fool, Self-contempt,
Ran shrieking down the room,
The bauble flaming in the sun
And darkling in the gloom,
Till fair-haired Love passed through the throng
That fell to north and south,
And took her in his tender arms
And kissed her quivering mouth.
He turned his stern commanding eyes
Upon the shrinking throng;
“Down, down!” he cried, “ye traitor knaves,
Ye have usurped too long!”
Then taking both her slender hands,
He led her to the throne;
“What say you, dearest?” whispered he,
“I come to claim my own!”

THE KOBOLD

The white moon steals through the cobbled street
With trailing garments and milk-white feet,
And the shadows hurry away and hide
Under the stone bridge in the tide.
The streets are silent, the casements close,
And the nightcapped people doze and doze.
In a mellow nook of the city walls
A red-capped Kobold calls and calls;
He croons and mutters a mystic rune,
And quavers a quaint old loving-tune,
And by-and-by down the charmed street
Comes a snow-white maiden, calm and sweet.
Her face like a lily-flower is set
With hair that gleams like a golden net.
The moon spins strands that she stumble and fall,
But unharmed she follows the Kobold's call:
For once a year, at the first cock-crow,
The Kobolds may come from the earth below,
And if they can win her with temptings three,
A fair earth-maid shall their ruler be.
"Oh, what wilt thou ask, Earth-maid," said he,
"To come to our castle, our queen to be?
Gold and jewels thy love shall pay;"
But the sleep-charmed maiden answered "Nay."
"Power shall be thine, that all shall quail;"
But calm was the maiden sweet and pale.
The Kobold pondered; then down he slipped,

And into the shadows he hopt and skipped.
In a moment he came with his final charm
With a sleepy baby under his arm.
“This shall be thine if thou be our queen.”
The maiden smiled, and the golden sheen
Of her hair fell round her; one step she made,—
“Give it to me in my arms,” she said.
She laid its soft head on her breast,
Its warm round limbs to her heart she pressed.
Then down the steps of the ancient wall,
Where the soft waves plash and rise and fall,
The Kobold led them to where a boat
In the gleam and the shadow swung afloat
Then over the moonbeam’s silver track
They drifted with never a thought turned back;
The baby veiled with the maiden’s hair,
And the cold Kobold with his grin and stare.

THE WAY IN THE WOOD

The woodland path is deep in leaves
That mark a golden way
Wherein, last happy summertide,
We two were wont to stray.

All golden lies the way, to trace
Where happy love hath been,
That hearts unblest might see and mark
And learn to walk therein.

THE LINE RIDER

Over the mesa, 'neath the milk-white moon,
Leisurely riding through the wonder-night,
Went Sanderson, line-rider, full of dreams
Of young Dolores, sweetest of brown maids.
(Something lies hidden in the coyote grass.)

Only a month ago those canon walls
Moon-white, beheld a shadowy train wind down,
Contrabandista, laden with mescal;
Pepe, their chief, exultant, almost home.
(Something lies sullen in the coyote grass.)

Apache rumors had preceded them,
Herding white settlers homeward. Sanderson,
Frontier-wise, watched the canny Mexicans,
Saw them untroubled, couched, and got his prey.
(Something lies vengeful in the coyote grass.)

Musing, his firm mouth smiling now and then
With reminiscent tenderness, he rode,
Unheeding how that Pepe had fled unscathed,
Until his horse, snorting and trembling, shied.
(A sudden spring from out the coyote grass!)

O brown Dolores! musing 'neath the moon
That floods the homely old adobe walls,
Ask Pepe, when he comes to you tonight,
Whose horse he rides? What makes his dagger
dark?
(Something lies silent in the coyote grass!)

THE SWINGING GATE

The twilight is full of sadness,
And the wind in its coat of gray
Skulks like a wolf through the shadows,
And will not be scared away.

Down at the foot of the garden
The gate is swinging slow,
As if invisible footsteps
Were passing to and fro.

And it seems to me in my musing
They are feet of my coming fate,
That will find their way to my threshold
And pass it like the gate.

O say, do ye bring good tidings,
Ye unseen messengers?
Or is it sorrow and boding
Of future griefs and cares?

The gate swings slowly, slowly,
And the shutters creak and start;
I sit in the glowing lamp-light,
But a shadow fills my heart.

THE TRAIL ON THE MESA

Over the mesa, bare and brown,
Under the blazing southern sun,
A worn old trail leads forth from the town
To the dwelling of those whose toil is done.

A little cluster of graves, forlorn,
Forgotten, lonely, unkempt, and still;
While round the cactus and through the thorn
The narrow trail creeps over the hill.

Somebody's lover, somebody's friend,
Under each wooden head-board lies;
Somebody's drama played to the end,
To praising mortals or weeping skies.

Sin and sorrow and love, now past,
Strength to conquer and fault to fail;
These they have known; and then, at last,
The slow sad journey over the trail.

The sun is riding home to his rest,
The gates of the Great Corral swing wide.
The trail leads on to the heart of the west,
Over the crest of the great divide.

THE ROCK COLUMBINE

'Tis a little fairy dancer,
Clad in red and gold,
Dancing while the breeze is fluting
Music faint and old.

Vis-a-vis a butterfly
Balances and bows;
Dainty little courtier,
Come to pay his vows.

In a little brown arroyo
Many miles away,
Dance, my lady Columbine!
Dance, my lover gay!

IN THE CANON

A song of thee, O heart of me!
A song of the golden west.
O to ride with the sun thro' the fields of air,
And deep in thy hills to rest!
I know a canon deep and still,
Where the swift sweet water flows;
It whispers a secret, it croons a song,
Such as the world's heart knows.

*Ohé querido! how long wilt thou remember me?
Till the bird's song is over, till the night grows
chill.*

*A little while, beloved, and I shall be forgotten,
And the heart that worships thee be still.*

The moonlight falls on the scarred cliff walls,
A faint little breeze comes sighing;
The stream that sings of its mountain springs
To its wooing is replying.
A girl's light touch on a sweet guitar,
A lightsome jest and laughter.
Two vows of love to the stars above,
A dream of two hearts,— and after?

*Ohé, querido! how long wilt thou remember me?
Till the bird's song is over, till the night grows
chill.*

*A little while, beloved, and I shall be forgotten,
And the heart that worships thee be still.*

THE END OF THE STORY

It was the end of the story,
The dream was over and done,
As the fairy mists of morning
Fade in the flaming sun.

It was only the old delusion
That speeds so fast to its end;
She dreamed of him as a lover,
He thought of her as a friend,

And the long hand-clasp at parting,
The soft caress and the sigh?
To her it had meant, "I love you";
To him it had said, "Goodby!"

And that is why the spring-times
Have found her growing gray,
With lips where his kiss still lingers,—
Pure lips that have learned to pray—

While the gentle heart still echoes
The tones she will hear no more,
And the wistful eyes see visions
That will dawn on the other shore.

THE LOVE ANGEL

Once in our lives is an angel with us,—
We, the children of sinful men!
And whether his tarrying ban or bless us,
Never we look on his face again.

Then is the time of our soul's unfolding.
Sweets undreamt of are ours to taste,
Joy unknown in the fair earth's holding,
All life's glory to hoard or waste.

Then is the time of our greatest beauty.
Even to common eyes we shine.
And life is passion and love is duty,
And the blood within us is golden wine.

But O the pity! and O the wonder!
The angel's clasp, being loosed, will fall,
Helpless and hopeless we shrink asunder,
And life's gray sameness is over all.

But because of the time that the angel's finger
Clasped our own in a loving hold,
Something lofty around us lingers,
Though life grow sordid and hearts grow old.

Some of the altar fire still burning
Lights us on through the weary maze,
Though the heart within us is longing, yearning,
For the broken trust and the ended days.

TWO TURNINGS

I came to a turn in my fate,
And my love stood by;
I went to his side with a heart elate,
And "Little I care," said I,
"Little care I how rough the weather,
While thou and I are safe together!"

I came to a turn in my fate,
But my love was gone:
There came no word through the silent gate,
Though I watched and prayed till dawn;
And "Little care I how fair the weather
Since love and I are no more together!"

KING, QUEEN AND JESTER

Dead in the palace, the selfsame day,
The king and the royal jester lay.
One lay robed in his regal pride,
And one with his bauble by his side.
The queen drew near as the sun went down,
First to the king and then to the clown,
And mused, as the solemn shadows fell,
On the two dead men who had loved her well.
All the kingdom had heard and known
That the great king loved her more than his
throne.

He had warred and intrigued for honors meet
To lay at his lovely lady's feet;
And now, from his last fight, sore bested,
They had brought him home to the palace, dead.
The jester, nothing at all had he
But a gentle smile from his liege lady;
Yet, for her sake, in the turbulent court,
He had turned the steel-edged sneer to sport.
Many a youth had gone astray
But that the jester looked that way.
And then he had saved from the river side
A desperate girl, and to save her, died.
And so the queen, in the quiet room,
Gazed in the garden, dim with gloom,
And knowing the heart in each man's breast,
Wondered which one had loved her best.
She gazed in the dim green garden close
As the scented flood of evening rose;
And not for the king, in his guarded state,
Was it that she bewept her fate,
But for all the sweetness that might have been
Had fate but missed to crown her queen.

THE LAST COVENANT

Many a promise thou and I together
Have made, O Life!
Many a covenant of old time, when tempting
And pain were rife.

Many a rugged lesson hast thou taught me
From end to end,
Nor scorned me that I shrank from thy strict
teaching,
O faithful friend!

Many a time thy mighty hand has held me,
When from the field
Like a mad coward I had fled, not daring
To fight nor yield.

Many a time hast thou upheld my spirit,
When with tense breath
Through the wide door have we beheld him
leering—
Our foeman, Death.

Some day, O friend, he will have passed the
portal,
And from the light
Will bear me, longing for the flooding sunshine,
To darkest night.

Oh, promise me that when my sifted spirit
Shall know release,
Freed from its clods of earth and all their
weakness
To rest in peace,

Oh, promise me that first upon the border
Of my new way,
Thou wilt embrace and as of old time lead me
To risen day!

TO M. B. G.

An Angel passed through Heaven one day
Where the souls of the children ran at play;
And "Which of you little ones," said he,
"The messenger of the Lord will be,
To carry a lamp of love aglow
To a home on the summer earth below?
For they say there has come a tender prayer,
Tremulously, from the lower air,
For a baby's clinging lips and hands
Full of love from heavenly lands."
The souls of the children crowded near,
Eagerly crying, "We are here,
Ready to carry the joyous news.
Since the Lord hath sent thee among us, choose."
The Angel smiled, and gently said,
Laying his hand on a little head,
"Thou, wilt thou go? Then, children, come
And make her fair for her earthly home."
The children ran, and the golden whirls
Of the sunbeams wove in a crown of curls.
They caught wee stars from the glistering skies
To hide in the shadows of her eyes;
And around the sweet white soul was drawn
The pinky bloom of the early dawn.
The Angel, guarding her all the while,
Kissed her mouth to a lovely smile.
Then round her they gathered, one by one,
To bless her and love her ere she was gone.
The Angel guarded her as she went

In peace from the glowing firmament,
Into a world of light and song,
Where June ran blithely the fields along,
And laid her happily down to rest,
In her mother's arms, on her mother's breast.
The years have passed, and the love she brought
Still blooms in whisper and deed and thought;
And ever and ever through good and ill,
The love of the Angel guards her still!

HEARTSEASE

Heart's ease!
What sweeter hansom could I give to thee,
Oh, dearest one, from heart to heart,
For days of hope, and days of pain,
For scorching sun and sudden rain;
For weary days of jar and fret,
And vain regret;
What sweeter hansom could I give to thee,
Oh, dearest one, from heart to heart,
Than this — than these?

THE OLD DRESS

What shall we do with the poor old dress,
Fit to be cast aside
Long ere out of life's storm and stress
Its busy owner died?

Not worth remaking, and room is scarce,
And to leave it hung in its place
Means sudden pangs of a scarce-healed woe
And a lost beloved face.

Yet that dress was shabby that close beside
Another of silk might hang,
And it brushed its neighbor nestling there
With never a grudging pang.

For the heart that beat in the shabby gown
Loved the heart in the silken dress,
And left it a lesson of life-long love
And patient unselfishness.

O silent witness of mother-love
Till the warm heart fell asleep!
Good enough for the mother's wear,—
Then good enough to keep!

Fold it away with reverent hands
And quiet and loving tears,
Then pray for the heart in the silken dress,
Through the motherless coming years!

A LOVER TO DEATH

I heard my sweet one singing in the garden
A song of love and thee, O grisly Death!
Better to be with thee, her song's sad burden,
Than watch a blossomed love that withereth.

What hath a joyous maid to do with singing
Of thee, thou refuge of the weary soul!
Hast coveted, and sent these fancies winging
To sting her musings from their happy goal?

She hath no smile for thee, no tendernesses
Of look and cadence; thy unhallowed kiss
Would freeze her love to silence; thy caresses
Would never cheer her like our human bliss.

E'en shouldst thou steal her, cold and un-
responding,
At thy disastrous touch her charm would fade.
E'en though thou steal her, Death, beyond thy
bonding
Her soul and mine would revel, unafraid.

I hear my sweet one singing down the alleys
Of roses red enameling the green.
She hath forgot thee, Death! Thy cruel sallies
Slip from her guarded soul, unfelt, unseen!

EDELWEISS

White in the silence of some heavenward Alp.
Like sacred crystals of a lover's tears,
They seem the ghost of blossoms which have
paled,
Pressed between leaves of long-remembered
years.

FROM A WAVE CREST

"O swallow, fair swallow,
Say, whence art thou winging?"

"I come from a clime
Where the wild wind is singing;
Where the long shoreward rollers
Are green as your grasses,
And white foam-flowers blossom
In umber crevasses.
Then over a wild
Where the blue waters darken,
And the wind shrieks a slogan
To which the ships hearken,
While deep in their darkness
The mermaids awaken
And rise through the deep
Whose fierce heart is shaken.
There's a smother of foam
And a tangle of waters,
And a mocking and luring
Of ocean's wild daughters."

“Oh swallow, dear swallow,
Say, what of the sailors?”

“Be still, idle maid,
Let their widows be wailers.
I must on to my vision,
Untiring, unresting,
The sea’s for its own,
But a swallow’s for nesting.”

THE NECROMANCER

Out of the quiet every-day
Where no vain longings be,
With an idle wave of his powerful hand
He, smiling, calleth me.

Then all the world falleth away,
Till, out of all the rest,
These only — his dear arms round me,
My head upon his breast.

Always the spell is just the same:
The fleeting time of bliss,
And then, the loosing of his arms,
The longing for his kiss.

Bright and hard doth the world return:
Under my cross I bow.
Alas! that what was once so sweet
Should be but semblance now!

THE SINGING WIND

The wind sang in the cloud-swept sky
And over the dim earth-breast,
The wind's song is the lonely cry
Of one who knows no rest.

Long ago when the earth was young,
With witcheries manifold,
The sun loved her beautiful face
With a confident love and bold.

She was meant for the great sun's bride,
And the wedding-day was soon,
But she loved another who came at dusk,
And she ran away with the moon.

The sun was a wizard fierce and strong,
And his vengeance swiftly fell.
The moon grew cold and the earth grew old
Under his potent spell.

Bound together forevermore,
Yet far asunder, they;
Slaves of the great sun's fiery will
Forever and for aye.

So the wind sings in the cloud-swept sky
And over the white wave-crest.
The sad wind is the dear earth's soul,
And sings the grief of her breast.

A GAME OF TAG

Little Jack Frost ran out one day
And called to the Brook to come and play.
“Let’s play tag, and you must run,
And I’ll be It, and won’t we have fun?
Old Father Winter will think I’m lost!
Hooray!” cried little Jack Frost.

So the Brook ran off with a merry shout,
And Jack at her heels in a jolly rout.
Down through the plowed fields, sunny and
bare,
Into the woods and the piny air,
Past mighty boulders, gray and mossed,
The Brook led little Jack Frost.

Over the waterfall she sprang,
And the hills with her mocking laughter rang.
Down came the leaves in a gorgeous throng
To hide her away as she fled along.
Under the mill-wheel her hair she tossed,
And laughed at little Jack Frost.

But oh, and alas! how tired she grew!
Slower and slower her light feet flew.
Panting, under the bridge she ran,
And into the wide marsh, still and wan.
She faltered a moment, tired and lost:
“Tag!” cried little Jack Frost.

SOLDIERS

If I were only a soldier

I would ride away to the wars,
And I'd wave my sword and lead the charge

Under the Stripes and Stars.

But mother says my little crutch

Is a mighty weapon, too.

And that many a foe is put to flight

When he hears its brisk tat-too.

Soldiers are sometimes wounded,

And come back home from war

With medals glittering on their breasts,

And many a glorious scar;

But mother says some soldiers

Have fights that no one knows,

And that aches well borne are just as fine

As wounds received from foes.

Then when the war is over

And all the fights are won,

How the people cheer when the men come home

And their splendid work is done!

But mother says my dear wheeled chair

Is a fine triumphal car,

And that many a voice will shout for joy

When her boy comes home from war.

HIS BICYCLE LIGHT

Each night I stand beside the gate
And listen down the street,
Whence dusky breezes bring the scent
Of locust-blossoms sweet.
On summer eves and autumn nights
I wait in peace to see
The lantern on his bicycle
Shine up the road to me.

All cheerily the other lights
Stream out across the dark,—
The lights of home, to which he rides,
The long day's happy mark,
And yet, for all their cozy glow,
Those lights are incomplete
Till the star upon his bicycle
Comes shining up the street.

Oh, light upon his bicycle,
Thou art my beacon star,
And, shining through and through my heart,
Sendst pain and grief afar,
I have no shadows on my face,
Nor worry any more,
To show within that light that comes
And lingers at our door!

THE QUEST

The good knight set his lance in rest
 (Ho for the knight of silver tongue!)
And sallied forth on his lady's quest
 (Heigho! for the world was young).
The rats in the castle were driving them out
 (Ho for the castle old and gray!)
So she thought it well to be looking about.
 (Heigho! for the first of May!)

The knight rode many a weary mile
 (Ho for the knight and the lagging steed!)
Then he sat him down by a rustic stile
 (Heigho! for a cup of mead!)
Many a castle, in and out
 (Ho for the persevering swain!)
He had searched and prodded and poked about—
 (Heigho! it was all in vain).

One their tapestries wouldn't fit
 (Ho for the wondrous tapestry!)
And one had a ghost which haunted it
 (Heigho! for the spooks gone by).
One was swept by winds of the air
 (Ho for the boisterous, ramping breeze!)
And one had shelter enough and to spare
 (Heigho! for the dripping trees).

So home again from his bootless quest
 (Ho for the eye that looked askance!)
The tired knight told at his dame's behest,
 Heigho! his fruitless dance.
They discussed each castle as it might hap
 (Ho for the rats that drove them away!)
Then they stayed where they were and bought
 them a trap,
And the rats moved out on the first of May!

THE CONTEST

“The pen is mightier far than the bow,”
 Said Richard the clerk one day;
And Dickon the archer pulled his moustache
 In a rough, irascible way.

“Mightier, far, for a musty scroll,”
 Quoth Dickon, “all men may know;
But for winning a fray or the heart of a maid,
 Give me goosefeather and bow!”

“A proof!” cried they both; and said Richard
 then.

“This shall our contest be:
Whichever wins to Maid Marian's bower,
 His be the victory.”

Richard, with horn and brush and quill,
A beautiful missive wrought,
And with letters of scarlet and gold made bright
Each tender poetic thought.

He bound it fast with a silken string
To the stem of a rose in bloom,
And tossed it deftly, at evenfall,
Into Maid Marian's room.

She shrank alarmed from this strange white bird
Which flew with the waning light;
When sudden she heard the twang of a bow
And an arrow's singing flight.

Into the room, at her very feet,
It sank most skilfully,
And tied to the gray goosefeather shaft
Was a cluster of fleurs-de-lis.

Startled, out of her bower she peeped,
Then gazing and fixed she stood,
Watching the blue-eyed archer there
By the edge of the dim greenwood.

Close to her heart Maid Marian
Pressed arrow and lily-weed.
The letter lay at her feet forgot:
Maid Marian could not read!

Moral

The pen is a mightier thing, no doubt,
Than even a bow of yew;
But 'tis weightier far to understand
The woman you seek to woo.

THE KING AND THE KOO-TOO

There was a king, you may have heard,
Who wished to own a Koo-too bird,
Because one day he chanced to look
Within the pages of a book,
And saw its strange description writ,
And immediately wanted it.
So in a great decree he said
That everyone should lose his head
Unless within a year and a day
The Koo-too bird had come to stay.
So all the people sailed away.
They left their cooking on the stoves,
They left their axes in the groves;
They left their ploughs stuck in the furrows,
They left their cities and their boroughs,
And desperately ran and spurred
To find the wondrous Koo-too bird.
The king within his palace sat
With no companion but his cat,
And no refreshment but his books.
The Koo-too hunt had called his cooks.
Yet were they home, was naught to eat,—
The farmers had not sowed their wheat!

There was no butcher in the land,
No fisher on the blank sea-strand!
For in the land no man nor thing
Was left beside the cat and the king.
The king was very hungry, yet
He wished the Koo-too for a pet.
At last, however, he decided
He much preferred his house provided
With cooks and soup and bread and meat
Than Koo-toos, which one could not eat.
And so he made that very day
A proclamation put this way:
"On sober reconsideration
The king withdraws his proclamation,
And thus decrees, that, in a word,
He abolishes the Koo-too bird.
And (this to make his subjects bolder),
No head shall leave its native shoulder."
He had a dreadful task to think;
He got himself all over ink,
And had to walk to the next-door king's
Because he had no horse nor wings,
And had to stand upon a chair
And hammer up his edict there;
Then home again to sit and wait
Until the First Cook slammed the gate.
People came home, and there they stopped.
The king had soup. The subject dropped.
The moral is, don't lose your cooks
For any nonsense out of books.
Better the bird upon your hat
Than one which has no habitat.

KERRECTED

When Mary Ann Dollinger got the skule daown
thar on Injun Bay
I was glad, fer I like ter see a gal makin' her
honest way.
I heerd some talk in the village abaout her flyin'
high,
Tew high fer busy farmer folks with chores ter
dew ter fly;
But I paid no sorter attention ter all the talk
ontell
She come in her reg'lar boardin' raound ter
visit with us a spell.
My Jake an' her hed been cronies ever sence they
could walk,
An' it tuk me a-back ter hear her kerrectin' him
in his talk.
Jake aint no hand at grammar, though he haint
his beat fer work;
But I sez ter myself, "Look aout, my gal, yer
a-foolin' with a Turk!"
Jake bore it wonderful patient an' said in a
mournful way
He p'sumed he was behindhand with the doin's
at Injun Bay.
I remember once he was askin' fer some o' my
Injun buns
An' she said he should allus say "them air" stid
o' "them is" the ones.

Wal, Mary Ann kep' at him stiddy, mornin
an' evenin' long,
Tell he dassent open his mouth fer fear o'
talkin' wrong.
One day I was pickin' currants daown by the
old quince tree
When I heerd Jake's voice a-sayin', "Be ye
willin' ter marry me?"
An' Mary Ann kerrectin' — "*Air* ye willin', you
sh'd say."
Aour Jake he put his foot daown in a plum
decided way.
"No women-folks is a-goin' ter re-arrangin' me:
Hereafter I say *craps, them is, I calk'late* an' *I be*.
Ef folks don't like my talk they needn't hark ter
what I say,
But I aint a-goin' ter take no sass from folks from
Injun Bay.
I ask ye free an' final, Be ye goin' ter marry me?"
An' Mary Ann sez tremblin' yet anxious like,
"I be!"

UP BERKSHIRE WAY

Seems ter me it's dretful long
Sence I saw them shinin' hills!
Suthin's pullin' at my heart
Till my old eyes brims an' fills.
When I dream abaout 'em nights
Care an' sorrer pass away:
Nuthin' but old saounds an' sights
Useter be up Berkshire way.

Thar's the old haouse on the hill
Set araound with apple-trees;
Thar's Lake Garfield shinin' still,
Jest a-flutterin' in the breeze.
Seems ez ef I couldn't wait
Tell the winter's passed away,
Longin' so ter see the folks
'Mongst the hills up Berkshire way.

Never was such astrachans
Sech ez made the old trees red;
Never was sech skies ez laughed
Through the green leaves overhead.
Aint no place in all the airth
Cuddles in my heart ter stay
Like thet little humly taown
'Mongst the hills up Berkshire way!

MOTHER REMEMBERS

When we wuz young we wuz cunnin', I s'pose;
'Least thet's what mother declares, an' *she* knows!
You'd laugh at the treasures she's hoarded
away —

Little scuffed shoes thet wuz wore out in play;
Little white ringlets from somebody's hair,
When we wuz little an' helpless an' fair —
An' mother remembers.

Now we are growed up an' headstrong an' sad;
Then we wuz little an' lovin' an' glad,
The tricks that we played, an' the prizes we
won,
The smart things we said, an' the cute things
we done,
Are things we furgit in the worry of life;
But when she kin tell 'em to husband or wife.
W'y, mother remembers!

Up on the hill wher' the soft breezes pass,
Little mounds rise through the long wavin' grass.
The babies thet sleep ther were dust long ago,
Wher' the sweet-scented s'rub an' the rose-bushes
grow,
An' no one has thought on or mourned 'em for
years;
But she saw 'em last through her heart-breakin'
tears,
An' mother remembers!

A FAMILY HEIRLOOM

He was married to Sophronisby a good many
year ago,
But she passed away from this mortal earth,
a-leavin' him here below,
And bein' a likely widderer, his decent mournin'
done,
He sarched about fer a number tew ter inherit
from number one.
His dead wife's sister Susan hed a kinder takin'
way,
But his investments in women folks didn't sorter
seem to pay,
Fer Susan she only lived a year, an' up an' died
in the fall,
An' Job he was sorter paralyzed at the cussedness
of it all.
His dead wives' sister Mary was wonderful good
an' kind
Ter the little wailin' babby thet Susan hed left
behind,
An' so one mornin' at breakfast we wan't sur-
prized ter see
An invitation in Mary's hand ter weddin' number
three.
Mary she sorter paid him, lasted three years or
more,
Till all of a sudden she petered out an' went ter
the shinin' shore.

He wouldn't put up no tombstone till he'd
buried number last,
Fer he found it pretty expensive, they kept a-dyin'
so fast;
So he put up decent headstuns, simple and
cheap an' plain,
An' he married his dead wives' cousin, she thet
was christened Jane.
So he has kept in the family from Sophronisby
down,
And them thet he hasn't married he's beau'd
about the town.
Ef anyone sought a husband he managed ter be
on hand,
An' he stood by the family noble as ever a man
could stand.
An' now thet Jane's a-failin', an' lookin' peaked
an' thin,
The younger generation is a-waitin' ter step in.
He's married most of the family from away back
in the past,
An' I reckon thet he'll be ready as long as the
women last.
And by-and-by when the graveyard is claimin'
his mortal clay,
They'll feel thet a family heirloom has suddenly
passed away.

THE OLD MELODEON

When mother married father, thirty-five short
year ago,
'Twuz the days when dresses sorter sagged, they
cut 'em aout so low;
An' hair wuz parted mighty prim an' looped up
on each ear,
An' the men-folks wore long beauty-locks, so
thick they couldn't hear;
An' folks wuz mighty keerful then, as her weddin'
fixin's shows,—
Every thread wuz spaced an' caounted, an' the
stitches set in rows.
Wal, among her weddin' presents this old melo-
deon stood,
All gallus with its shinin' keys an' case o' bright
rosewood.
Ef ye worked the pedal stiddy an' still contrived
ter play,
Sech tunes ez these meandered, an' gently riz
away;
"Lord Lovel," an' "Long, long ago," an' "Roll
on, silver moon,"
An' "Hours there were"; an' old Tom Moore,
his wuz the kind er tune!
Them wuz the days o' sentiment, an' "Rose o'
Lucerne."
"Old Mistletoe bough," an' "Buy a broom," an'
"Jamie's return."
But by-an'-by a sorter march come stealin'
daown the keys,

Mixed up with sad heart-breakin' tunes thet
sorter went like these:
"Daown where the patriot army," wuz the
earliest tune thet grew,
"Oh Willie, we shall miss you!" an' "The ragged
coat o' blue,"
"When this cruel war is over," an' the "Tramp,
tramp, tramp,"—
The songs o' lonesome women an' the shoutin's
o' the camp.
But the sobs an' groans grew fainter an' it wuzn't
very long
Before the old melodeon sorter hummed a cradle
song;
And the years wan't very many but ye'd hear
it go by chance,
Jest ter play old-fashioned lancers fer the little
feet ter dance.
By-an'-by—there's just one tune thet it's
a-longin' fer ter play,
An' then I guess its music-days is sorter passed
away;
It will brace fer one more effort, rich with many
memories,
When the weddin'-march 'll echo daown its
yeller wheezy keys.

THE BEST OF THE BARGAIN

Sally an' me was courtin' an' like enough ter be
spliced,
When I heern' o' suthin' I calkilate needn't be
told me twicet;
Fer when we druv ter the village my fun was
allus spiled
By the folks a-nudgin' an' whisperin' till their
actin' made me riled.
So I clum right aout o' the wagon, fer Dobbin
wouldn't skeer,
An' I went straight up ter a gawky, an' sez I
"Naow look a-here,
What be ye laughin' at, darn ye! a-winkin' at
me an' Sal?"
"W'y," sez he, "yeou're drivin' an old white hoss
an' beauin' a red-haired gal.
Anybody'll tell ye, an' it needn't get ye cross,
Wherever thar's a red-haired gal yeou'll see an
old white hoss."
The crowd all sez, "W'y, sartin," so up ter my
seat I clum,
Shook up the lines on Dobbin an' thoughtful
meandered hum.
After a power o' thinkin' I traded the hoss next
day
Ter Jededier Hawkins thet lives daown village
way.
I had an oneasy feelin' thet I'd swopped him at
a loss,
But I vaowed I'd ruther stick ter the gal an' dew
withaout the hoss.

Wal, I went one day ter Sally's whar I'd often
been afore,
An' it tuk me a-back, fer the old white hoss was
a-standin' afore the door;
An' under the honeysuckles, as comferable as
yeou please,
Was Jededier with Sally, a-helpin' her shellin'
peas.
I went hum sayin' nuthin' fer 'twarnt no use ter
fuss,
An' I set daown aout in the woodshed, an'
ruminated thus:
"Things is agin ye, Hiram; daown in yeour
profit an' loss
Yeou aint got nuthin' ter put agin yer gal an'
a good strong hoss.
Things is agin ye, Hiram: better ter be resigned;
Git used ter seein' thet good old hoss with Sally
an' him behind."
It sorter seemed ter console me when I thought
what folks hed said,
Thet thar's allus a pesky temper inside of a
carrot head.
Naow they're up an' married, an' terday Jed
come ter me
An' begged me ter take back Dobbin—"I'll trade
him cheap," sez he.
But I shook my head an' answered, "I'm
afeered that wouldn't dew,"
Fer Sally is dretful shrewish, an' I dreaded thet
she'd come tew!

ESEK'S BABY

Esek wuz a n'atheist —
 'Least he useter say so, cuz
Somehaow he could never see
 What the plan o' nater wuz.
Useter say he'd prayed an' prayed;
 Things went cross-wise jest the same!
Never had no sorter show.
 Thet's before the baby came.

Useter say aour heaven's here;
 Land o' love, I'd *hope* it ain't!
Also thet aour hell's on airth —
 'Twuz enough ter try a saint.
But ther's nuthin' wuz too good
 Fer thet baby, an' I faound,
Jest by accident, ez 'twere,
 Esek sorter shiftin' raound.

Made a diffunce, don't ye see?
 Sorter needed God ter pray to.
'Spose ther's hell! thet ain't no place
 Fer a babe ter go away to!
Got so thet we useter find him
 Tellin' baby Bible stories;
Lookin' sorter guilty though:
 Said he spoke in allegories.

By-an-by' when she got big,
He jined the church fer an example
Got ter be a piller, too:
Useter kote him fer a sample!
Kinder habit, I p'sume,
But he sorter grew ter love it.
Call him atheist naow! Wal, sir,
Guess ye'd hev ter fight ter prove it!

WHEN I WAS WISE

I wisht that I was young agin, 'bout seventeen
year old;
Fer then the moon was silver an' the sun was
shinin' gold.
An' knowledge! Why, my goodness! if ye take
it anyways,
I'll never know as much agin as I knowed in
them days.
I seemed to come into the world like Minervy,
all complete;
I hed the biggest stack o' brains I'm ever like to
meet;
I was fine at readin' character in every sort o'
men;
An' I've been unlarnin' ever sence, the things
that I knowed then!

I hed all sorts o' theories how children ought to
grow,
But my young uns ain't no better than some other
folks I know.

I used to lay the law down on all sorts an' kinds
o' things,
But I ain't no better off today, an' hev'n't growed
no wings.
I ain't no better off than if I'd never knowed
it all,
An' I ain't alarmed the world one bit, ner made
the folks feel small.
Yet when I git discouraged, an' things goes
crooked-ways,
I wisht that I could know the half that I knowed
in them days!

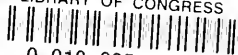
THE LAST TURNING

As one who comes at evenfall
Near some still hamlet's lights,
Whose homely glimmering through the dusk
To dreamless rest invites;

Yet at the last turn stops to gaze
Shoulderward down the road,
Where in the singing, breezy morn
With wilful steps he strode;

So at the last short turn of life
One waits, a breath within,
To muse upon his day ; and so
Strides onward to his Inn.

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